

The Catholic Women's League of Canada

Kingston Diocesan Council

Education and Health

Directive # 7

January 31 2015

From: Maureen Vincentine, Education and Health Standing Committee Chairperson

In this directive, I hope you will notice a theme of self education. The best way of supporting Catholic Education is to know what is happening in our schools and parishes. We often need to support Catholic Education with friends, neighbours, in the workplace or social gatherings. We need to know how to respond to questions so we need to be sure our facts are solid. Every school has a faith development person. You might invite them to a meeting and ask them to outline the religion programs presented in the various classes. Ask them about the liturgies and celebrations in the school and Church. Then ask how your members might become involved. Could you help by simply attending a school Mass, could your members plan and facilitate a Crowning ceremony this May? Could you invite the school or a class to participate in our initiative to pray for peace on Thursdays? I think many schools would welcome such interest.

The government of Ontario is proposing changes to the Sex Education Curriculum in the province. This is to be implemented in September, but little has been divulged as to what will be involved. Catholic schools have been teaching a family life program (Fully Alive) which covers human development and sexual health, developed under the guidance of The Assembly of Catholic Bishops of Ontario, for many years. Learn about the program so that when we are asked to adopt perhaps a new program, we are knowledgeable.

I met with the Algonquin Lakeshore Catholic District School Board special Assignment teacher responsible for Aboriginal youth in our schools. (I did not know we had such a position) In speaking with him, I learned we have many Aboriginal young people in our schools. He suggested a couple of ways we as Catholic Women's League members, might support them. They would really like

to increase the number of books on Native culture in our schools, especially at St. Theresa's Highschool, where there are quite a few aboriginal students. A donation might be made to the school for that purpose. Shawn MacDonald, advocating teacher would be glad to speak to any group about aboriginal youth issues. I learned so much in our discussion. Native schools are funded federally, and are funded at a rate which is \$2000 per student less than what our provincial schools (meaning our Catholic schools) are funded. Could we support native schools in our area? At a symposium on Native women that I attended, school children opened the day with a prayer of thanks and gratitude to the Creator. It was all in Mohawk, but lovely. The theme for the day was "Warrior Women, Empowering Native Women". The speakers were excellent! I also met with Shannon and Mark who work at FNTI at Tyendinaga . They presented me with a wealth of resource people and material to peruse. Tyendinaga is so close a community for many of us, should we not be educating ourselves on issues they face? The issues Native youth face, are not always the same as issues faced by other youth. Again, we first need to educate ourselves, then, we can support others in ways that are meaningful. Shannon's Dream is one organization we can support. "Feathers of Hope", a report written by aboriginal youth, gives us much to think about. One of our resolutions calls on us to take action. I suggest, part of our action be to learn more about Native issues.

Health

We continue to focus on mental health issues this year. Our voices are united with many, many others throughout our communities and our country as we endeavor to allow people to recognize and speak out about mental illness. Again, do we continue to educate ourselves? There is so much to read now on the topic, so many documentaries also. So may resources. Have you invited a speaker to a meeting yet? Perhaps you might ask members to collect articles from magazines and papers and have a discussion at a meeting. Let's learn more that we might be more supportive. The Bell "Let's Talk" initiative is on Jan. 28. Please support it if you can.

Environment

We think about St. Francis as one in tune with his environment. Pope Francis is following his example. In his address given to the European Parliament on November 25, 2014 he said: 'Respect for the environment means more than not destroying it; it also means using it for good purposes. I am thinking above all, of the agricultural sector, which provides sustenance and nourishment to our human family. It is intolerable that millions of people around the world are dying of hunger while tons of food are discarded each day from our tables. Respect for nature also calls for recognizing that man himself is a fundamental part of it.' Development and Peace is launching its Share Lent campaign February 7. It is entitled "Sow Much Love" and will be held at Providence Centre. It is continuing the theme of sustainability and small family farms in the global south. The presentation will be from 9:00 to 12:00. A light lunch will follow. Come and learn about some of the issues. Again, we can be more supportive if we know more. Let's support Development and Peace, our social justice arm of the Catholic Church.

RCIA

RCIA in your parish is probably gearing up towards Lent when candidates are eagerly learning the ways of our faith. If any women are enrolled, I suggest your council take a special interest and perhaps offer them a free membership for the year. They will then through the magazine and through your council learn about our activities and commitment. Make sure to make all candidates feel welcome at Mass. Perhaps you could attend one of their meetings and get to know them.

In closing, I recommend all of us learn something new this spring about issues that affect us all. Let this be an initiative realizing that we are much more supportive when we are knowledgeable! Read, listen, watch a show, talk to others. Learn more!

